

Issue: Proposed aquifer exemption for El Paso Water Utilities (EPWU)**Background/Status:**

- The Kay Bailey Hutchison desalination plant currently utilizes 3 Class V injection wells to dispose of waste concentrate into formations that qualify as underground sources of drinking water (USDW). The permit requires the concentrate meet primary drinking water standards. EPWU currently blends fresh water with concentrate to meet those standards. EPWU is asking TCEQ for an exemption to increase efficiency of their plant. EPWU is authorized to construct two additional injection wells. TCEQ has published notice for comment and requests for contested case hearing and will hold a public meeting in El Paso on July 14, 2011.
- Portions of the aquifers to be exempted are known as the Fusselman-Montoya-El Paso group. The top of the proposed exemption ranges from 1000' to 4000' below ground level (BGL) is approximately 2500' thick and covers an areal extent of 115 square miles.
- Region 6 last met with EPWU officials on this matter in September, 2010 and with TCEQ staff in December, 2010 to discuss technical issues. The notice indicates few changes have occurred since an earlier draft revealed several concerns.
 - The injection well field is 1/2 mile from the Texas / New Mexico border on Fort Bliss property. NMED has no issue with the modeling. NMOCD has not yet indicated an opinion.
 - There is shallower GW usage over the area. There are approximately 90 water wells ranging from 400' – 1100' in depth in the southern half of the proposed exempted area suggesting there may be fresher GW in the proposed exempted zone in that area.
 - There is a lack of source data and quality control for defining the formation. Currently only six wellbores, the three injection wells, and three test holes in proximity to each other and associated with the desalination facility, that partially penetrate the aquifers proposed for exemption.

(b) (5)



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